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Post Independence Konkani poetry: a mini-review

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A brief historical background

The post independence period (A.D. 1947-2003) is the most important period in the history of modern Konkani literature. This period saw intensification of struggle for freedom of Goa from the oppressive Portuguese colonial rule. Mahatma Gandhi and Rammohanar Lohia were idolized during this period. Shenoy Goembab had left behind his inspiring legacy which created awareness about Konkani as an independent language. After the liberation of Goa, the Konkani writers tasted the newly found freedom. There was democracy. There were elections to the village panchayats and the first legislative assembly of Goa. There was the first opinion poll in India to decide the political future of Goa as an independent union territory or as a part of greater Maharashtra by merger. These events galvanized the Konkani poets. The post liberation years, up to granting of statehood status, (1962-1987), revived the literary traditions of the culturally and idiomatically rich language. Poetry was the major medium of expression of the creative aspirations of the Konkani speakers during this period. After a huge historical gap of more than 400 years Konkani poetry reestablished itself as a popular form of literary expression. The dark, unproductive phase was finally over. According to poet Nagesh Karmali more than 500 Konkani poetry collections were published after liberation of Goa. This had led to a situation when writer-thinkers like Ravindra Kelekar were worried that other forms would be neglected if only poetry is patronized by the society.

Origin of the poetic impulse

But the origin of the creative impulse could be the suppression faced by the Konkani society in Goa during the Portuguese colonial rule. Konkani poetry has been claimed to be as old as the composition by the Maharashtrian saint Namdev (A.D. 1270-1350). This claim has certain

merit because the Konkani folklore is lyrically very rich and diverse. The oral traditions of Konkani Goan folk songs point to the rich and diverse literary heritage which was systematically destroyed by Goa's Portuguese colonial masters. Another line of evidence emerges from the wealth of the Konkani proverbs and limericks. Many of these have poetic form and essence. In his preface to the anthology of Konkani poetry, B.B. Borkar (1981) has stressed on the poetic sense of the common Konkani speakers of Goa. During the turbulent period of A.D. 1540-1570, the Portuguese burnt unknown number of Konkani scripts. So it is difficult to reconstruct a chronological history of Konkani's poetry traditions. There was an exodus of Konkani speakers from Goa who fled to Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala to avoid forcible conversion to Christianity. This diaspora kept some of the poetic and lyrical traditions of Konkani alive in coastal Karnataka and Malabar. These provide some rare glimpses of medieval Konkani poetry. The Goa inquisition issued stringent orders in A.D. 1731 and A.D. 1739 to suppress cultural and creative freedom. The Christian missionaries focused on devotional poetry in their efforts to appease the neo converts. But overall there was no response from the masses to attempt anything in vernacular idiom.

Forerunner of 20th century Konkani poetry:-The 'Mando' lyrics

The 'Mando' form of choral singing was born in the first quarter of 19th century. Influenced by western musical traditions and the typical Portuguese romantic songs like 'fados' the Mando lyrics could be considered as the first attempts to blend poetry with music within the contemporary social, cultural and political context. The Mando songs show influence of contemporary events on a romantic background. In fact, many of the famous Mando performances have unique poetic qualities. Unfortunately, the Mando compositions were excluded from the mainstream of Konkani poetry because these were rarely published. Mando composers like Ligorio da Costa (1821-1991), Carlos Dias (1854-90), Arnold da Menzes (1863-1917), Jezelen Rebello (1875-1931), Torcato de Figueiredo (1876-1948) could be considered as forerunners of 20th century Konkani lyrical poetry. This tradition has been continued vigorously after the liberation of Goa by composers like Tomazinho Cardozo.

The cultural setting

Post independence period is critically important for understanding the birth and development of modern Konkani poetry. Any review of Konkani literature requires a demarcation of the regional boundaries of the language. Konkani has been the natural language of the Konkani-a strip of land on India's west coast which traverses three states-Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka comprising the districts of Thana, greater Mumbai, Raigad, Sindhudurga, north and south Goa and North and South Kanara. Contributions to Konkani literature have been made by the Konkani speakers based in Goa and the diaspora settled in three other states-Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala.

The reviewers' dilemma

The present review has attempted to cover the contributions of poets from these four states. But there are some limits and constraints which would be certainly faced by the scholars and critics of Konkani poetry. The first constraint is the script. Poetry in Konkani has been written in four scripts- Devanagari, Roman, Kannada and Malayalam. Occasionally Persian script has been reportedly used. The second constraint is the lack of bibliographical work on Konkani literature. Annotated bibliographies of poetry publications are not available for any of the script in any of the state including Goa. The third constraint is consideration of the poems published in the book form and those which are found to be scattered in various Konkani periodicals. It is acknowledged that the reviewer may miss many good poems and poets who could not publish their work in a book form. Fourth constraint is the consistency of the poets in that field. It is a general observation that many good poets just fade out after they stop writing and publishing their poetry. Their creative impulse is not sustainable. The fifth constraint is the use of yardstick to distinguish good poetry from the bad. As the symposium conducted by Sahitya Akademy shows (Indian literature, March-April, 1987) there is no unanimity of opinion on the definition of good poem. Goa's senior poet M.L Sardesai has not been able to define it. But he considers it as the highest form of literature and gives importance to music and rhythm. He has compared a good poem to a "mantra". Satchidanandan's observations (1994) are pertinent here. According to him-"poem begins not in isolation, but in relationship'. He has quoted Lu chi- "Poet traps heaven and earth in the cage of form. The poet struggles with the silence and

meaninglessness of the world until he make it mean, make the silence answer and the non being be." Generally, we observe that modern Indian languages have developed faculties of literary criticism and built a tradition of good critical literature (*sameeksha sahitya*). New challenges have been identified and debated (reference to *Sahitya Akademy Symposium on Literary criticism: The new challenges, 1994*). This helps in setting up high critical standards to judge the merits of good poetry. No such objective yardstick has been used for critical appraisal of the post independence Konkani poetry. Populist, propagandistic and political or humorous, satirical compositions of temporary value have been often considered as good poetry. But slowly this situation is changing. Review of most of the poetry collections considered for this article showed that many of these had fairly long prefaces which do not meet the high critical and objective standards required for an independent peer-review. Many senior Konkani poets have included their own detail views (Nagesh Karmali, 1989; Madhav Borkar, 2002, Prakash Padgaonkar, 2003) about their poetry in their new poetry collections thus complicating the critical scene because a certain degree of neutrality is expected from the living poets. Such self explanatory and narcissistic appraisals seem to be a new trend in Konkani poetry and it may curtail the enthusiasm of young and emerging literary critics.

Founders of modern Konkani poetry

The first poem in the Antruzi dialect of Konkani was probably composed by Krishnamhat Bandkar (A.D. 1876-1945). But these compositions were popularised only through the oral traditions. Shenoy Goembab was a great scholar of Konkani language and culture. He is not known as a poet. But he composed a very famous and popular song 'Mhaje Goem'. It is a nostalgic piece of poetry glorifying the natural and cultural heritage of Goa. Goembab wrote "Dharatarevele sarg, he mhaje Goem ! Sasanachem sukh-dine, he Mhaje goem' (A paradise on earth, This is my Goa! An eternal source of happiness, This is my Goa!).

The medium of publication

To any Konkani poet the major problem after independence was to find a publisher willing to publish the work. As compared to many well established modern Indian languages, Konkani did not have a thriving publishing industry in the first half of the 20 th century. Many periodicals were short lived. Those which encouraged publication of poetry

included periodicals from Goa and other states with Konkani speaking population. These included Panchkhadaí-edited by B.V.Baliga (1918), Saraswat edited by V.S. Kudav(1923, 1942), Navayug- a magazine from Karwar (1940), Uzvad and Sarvodaya from Karwar (1947), Konkani Kinara from Kumta (1950), Rakhno (1938) founded by Monsieur Menezes (Mangalore), Ave Maria (1919), Goa Mail (1919), Goa Times (1930), Vavrandyancho Itt (1933) and Udentenchem Noketra (1946). Between 1947 to 1961 Mírg, Sad, Salík, Porjecho avaz, Gomant Bharatí fulfilled the need of the Konkani poets.

After the liberation of Goa in 1961, periodicals like Lok sad, Sant, Divti, Uzvad, Prakash, Nove Goem, Konkani, Salík, Parmal, Somar, Apurbai, Maruti were used for publication of Konkani poems. The Konkani edition of the Marathi daily Rashtramat and later the exclusively Konkani newspaper 'Sunaparant', the Konkani poetry magazine 'ritu' and the Konkani literary monthly, 'Jag' tremendously boosted publication of Konkani poetry. Special editions of Konkani annuals and periodicals, annual magazines of various institutions of higher education included Konkani poems. Today, finding a medium for publishing poems is not difficult for the Konkani poets. Many poets have established their own small publishing units and they don't depend on established publishers. This trend characterizes publication of poetry collections in Goa. It is found to be popular with the second and third generation of the poets. Various schemes such as the 'Poilo Chnavar' (first bloom) of Goa Konkani academy support young and budding poets and give them liberal grants for publishing their collections. With such encouragement post independence modern Konkani poetry has made substantial progress from the days of Bayabhav's 'Sadyavelim Fulam'. Three generations of Konkani poets have contributed handsomely to enrich the modern Konkani poetry and the fourth generation is expected to take over within the present decade.

Three generations of post independence Konkani poets:-

Although watertight and rigid temporal chronological classification is not possible in the creative field of poetry, three broad generations of post independence Konkani poets can be identified with some overlap.

1. The first generation covered the period 1946-1967. This was marked by Goa's freedom struggle, the awakening of political consciousness and the exciting aftershocks of liberation, the first taste of real

democracy after four centuries of colonial rule. B.B.Borkar, Manoharraí Sardessai, Abhijit, R.V. Pandit made major contributions whereas Pandurang Bhangí, Shankar Ramani, Shankar Bhandari, Vijaya Sarmalkar began to publish their poems. Bhangí and Ramani attempted to maintain respectful distance from the social and political events which had charged up activist poet like Shankar Bhandari. The terminal period 1961-1967 saw social, economic and political transition in Goa. The campaign against Goa's merger with Maharashtra during the 'Opinion Poll' provided impulse for propagandistic political poetry.

2. The second generation broadly covers the period after the 'Opinion Poll' (1967) upto 1984, the year of the massive mass agitation for Konkani as official language of the state of Goa. This was perhaps the most fertile period for Konkani poetry in Goa as well as Karnataka. Notably consistent and productive poets of this generation include Nagesh Karmali, Madhav Borkar, Shankar Parulkar, Pundalik Naik, Ramesh Veluskar, C. F. (Chafra) da Costa, Olivinho Gomes, Suresh Borkar, Jesse Fernandes, Prakash Padgaonkar, Kashinath Shamba Lolayenkar, Ramkrishna Zuarkar. This generation witnessed many mass movements, the imposition of emergency, the end of Congress rule in New Delhi, the end of MGP rule in Goa, the birth of students movement, growth and diversification of higher educational opportunities, massive urbanisation, the entry of Colour Television and birth of a consumerist neo rich middle class. The poetry of this period is remarkably diverse in form and content. New experiments were tried. Fr. Pratap Naik had edited an anthology of transliterated Konkani poetry in 1984 which includes 71 poems by 16 young poets. These are distinct from the poetry published in Goa during this period. A poetry collection published by Kerala Konkani Academy mentions the work of P.A. Shridhar, K.Ashok Kumar, Laxmish, B.Laxman Prabhu and B. Shivadas Mallya among others.
3. The third generation (1985 onwards) may be called the "Post TV" generation of Konkani poets. This period saw rapid urbanisation and industrialization, establishment of a separate university in Goa, entry of Television, environmental agitations, declaration Konkani as the official language of Goa, granting of statehood, the entry of Konkani railway and growing consumerism. The economic and social

transformation impacted the new poets. They were charmed by the previous two generations. Sudesh Lotlikar, Nilba Khandekar, Shashikant Punaji, Paresh Kamat, Vishnu Wagh, Purnanand Chari, Prasad Loliencar, Nayana Adarkar, Sanjeev Verenkar, Prakash Dattaram Naik, Ashok Shilkar, Nutan Sakhardande, Bhalchandra Gaonkar, Rajay Pawar are some of the noteworthy poets of these generation. Konkani poet from Kerala, R.R.Bhaskar has also made his mark.

The first generation was witness to the freedom struggle of India and Goa. Between 1945 to 1955, the notable poets in Konkani were Mumbai based Kashinath Shridhar Naik alias Bayabhav, Dinkar Desai from Karnataka, Gundu Amonkar, V.K. Nerurkar and S. M Varde. Waman Sardesai (1923-1994), who wrote under the pseudonym 'Abhijeet' in Gandhian fortnightly- "Mírg" contributed some excellent lyrical poems during this period. Bayabhav's 15 poems were published in October 1946 in the collection "Sadyavelim Fulam" (wild flowers from a plateau). This collection is considered by scholars as the beginning of modern Konkani poetry. His 'Sanvar' poem shows the influence of the Marathi poetry of Keshavasut. Bayabhav filled a gap in modern Konkani literature through this modest contribution. An interesting development which opened a new opportunity for Goan Konkani poets was the broadcast of Konkani programmes on the Portuguese radio station in Goa-Emissário de Goa. Since this had colonial control and censorship there was pressure on Indian Government to open broadcasting avenue for Konkani programmes. In 1952 the All India Radio, Mumbai launched its' Konkani language service. This opportunity was used by the Goan poets based in Mumbai. B. B. Borkar continued to publish his Konkani poems in various periodicals. His first Konkani poetry collection "Paizanam" (1960) includes 40 poems contributed during Goa's politically turbulent period of 1946-1960.

The Lohia phase-Impact of civil rights movement

For a critical understanding of the growth and evolution of modern Konkani poetry, the pre-independence political scene is equally important. The entry of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia in Goa in June 1946 was an epochal event. The movement for civil and political rights of Goans began on a voluntary mass scale after this event. It influenced the young poets like B. B. Borkar. His first Konkani collection 'Paizanam'

includes the poems of this turbulent and charged period. Konkani poetry acquired a political voice. Between 1948 to 1955, Konkani poetry became a patriotic vehicle of peoples' aspirations. From Paris, Manoharraí Sardessai began contributing to 'Porjecho Avaz' fortnightly. He wrote consistently during 1955 to 1961 and compiled 22 of his poems in the much acclaimed collection "Goyam Tuzya Mogakhatir"(1961). This was followed by another collection 'Zayat Zage (1964). These poems show socialist influence and have a strong undercurrent of nostalgia and powerful message of communal harmony. Reading of Manoharraí's poetry of this period is understanding the essence of the Goan identity. 'Agvadachya Shinva Tuvem' (To The Lion Of Aguada) is a poem dedicated to Dr. Lohia. In their parliamentary life Dr. Lohia and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru might have been adversaries but Poet Sardessai also welcomed Pandit Nehru in Goa by writing "Jawaharak yevkar" (welcome Jawahar). Sardesai's poetry has powerful social and humanistic themes and his craftsmanship of the words is beyond comparison in Konkani. He crafted short poems in 'Zayo Zuyo' and 'Pissolim'. These were highly appreciated because of the novelty of the form. B.B.Borkar compared this form with the Japanese Haiku and suggested to name it as "thikam" (Appropriate). Basically the root of this form adopted by Sardessai could be traced to the Goan folklore.

Despite his involvement in Goa's freedom struggle, Waman Sardessai alias Abhijit wrote absolutely different poetry. His poems composed during 1953 to 1959 mostly from the scenic locations in the western ghats stand apart from the socio-political themes used by his contemporaries. His poetry worships nature and spirituality. "Te Nile Nilshe Dhunvarepelyan" (beyond the bluish mist) is his famous nostalgic poem composed from Castlerock. Abhijit left his mark with only 28 poems but these are literary jewels.

Poet R.V.Pandit's contributions

A multidimensional and erudite personality and a photographer by profession, Raghunath Vishnu Pandit exploded on the firmament of Konkani poetry with the simultaneous publication of five poetry collections in 1963. 'Ayalem Toshem Gayalem', 'Mhoje Utor Gavadyachem', 'Chandraval', 'Dhortorechem Kovon' and 'Urtollem te roop dhortolem' were these five collections which included 140 poems, a substantial work as compared to the limited pre-liberation output of

Kinaki poetry. B.B.Borkar in his preface to 'aiyalem Toshem Gayalem' has compared Pandit to Walt Whitman. This is because Pandit's stylistics had a dynamic rhythm. His poetry was based on the rustic life of rural Goa. Pandit had closely observed the rural scene from his village Palem which has a substantial population of the ST Gavade community. Pandit captured the sufferings of the exploited working class. In "hanv Gavado muga" (Yes, I am a gavado), he captures the resilience of the Gavade community. They were the original inhabitants of Goa. But they lost the land to superior technologists and were marginalized. The essence of this community is captured by Pandit in the last few lines of this poem. 'You may continue to grind us, pulverize us, but we would never be reduced to dust, because we are the Gavades'. Liberated Goa had never heard such assertive words in poetry before. Pandit's humanist voice took the side of the underprivileged. He wrote against the economic exploitation of the farm laborers. Pandit also wrote romantic and philosophical poems but he was at his best when he touched social and rustic themes. Pandit introduced ecological imagery and thought in Konkani poetry and can be called the founding father of truly ecological Konkani poetry. "Kaddachem vhadpon" (the greatness of the wild grass) is a beautiful poem which provides deep ecological insight about human nature. The wild grass does not catch fire on its' own unless there is some human interference but the people blame the grass for its' inflammability. Pandit questions the human attitude towards the natural ecosystem. His ecological poetry was much ahead of its' time. He was the first poet to describe the process of crude salt production and the labour associated with it. Novelty of themes and their accurate use in poetry with minimalist style endeared Pandit to the new generation of Konkani poets. After his five simultaneously published collections, Pandit came out with 'Lharam' in 1965. His popular poem "Ayaz tu Yetalo dekhun" is included in this collection. Pandit often used to present this poem in his unique style. He included the reviews about his poetry in Lharam. These indicate the type of response which his five poetry collections received outside Goa. But after these six collections he seemed to have gone into hibernation till 1978 when he published 'Darya gazota' which was awarded the Sahitya academy award.

The abstract introvert school of Shankar Ramani and Pandurang Bhangí

Poet B.B. Borkar, Manoharraí Sardessai and R.V. Pandit expanded the scope of the Konkani poetry but they did not adopt abstract and introvert form. The entry of Shankar Ramani and Pandurang Bhangí during 1960-65 brought the modern abstract form in Konkani. Ramani and Bhangí's poetry runs parallel in the choice of themes and free verse. But still their poetry is different. Ramani was far more comfortable in Marathi and his earlier Konkani poems had not found their own identity as they did later when he published 'Jogalchem zad', 'Brahmakamal' and 'Nile Nile Brahma'. Bhangí wrote almost exclusively in Konkani and his poems of earlier days show an exceptional degree of maturity. Ramani and Bhangí's poetry revolves around nature, erotic motifs, spirituality, mystic experience and often seem to be influenced by their own traumatic experiences. They provided Konkani poetry a new and meaningful dimension which influenced second generation poets like Madhav Borkar. Ramani and Bhangí were well exposed to European and Latin American poets and especially Bhangí's poetry shows Spanish and Portuguese impact. He used a quote from Fernando Pessoa in his first collection 'Dístavo' (Vision) (1972). This collection includes Bhangí's 51 poems penned during 1962-1970. Many of the poems in this collection are influenced by Indian philosophical thought. In the title poem 'Dístavo' the poet paints the timelessness of earth and its creative energy. The poet adopts an ecologically erotic image when he uses the expression 'Tanní Voncal dikhal' (the young bride is full of juices) ('Bhuín tuji Díkal'). Bhangí's poetry seems to radiate both ecospiritual and ecoerotic energy. He gravitated more towards the ecospiritual and mystical form in his later poems.

Shankar Bhandari and Vijaya Sarmalkar

Immediately after Goa's liberation Shankar Bhandari found poetry as a natural medium to ventilate his anger against the mockery of democracy in his poem - 'Ganarajya' he uses the mythology and iconography of Lord Ganesh to criticize the distortion of the Indian republic. Although satirical this poem makes a scathing comment on degradation of contemporary value system of the 'Ganas' or masses. Bhandari worked on All India Radio and wrote beautiful songs. His

"Aílo Pavas" and "Gomate goem" capture the natural beauty of waterscape and landscape of Goa. Despite versatility with the pen, Bhandari was not consistently productive.

Socialist poet Gajanan Raikar is well known for his Marathi poetry but he penned some of the beautiful Konkani songs and poems. In 'Lamandivo' (the sacred hanging lamp), Raikar has captured the fertility power of the feminine in beautiful words using the image of the lamp illuminating the "garbhakud" (the uterus). He used the beats of Goa's folk songs in "Jodi jamli go" a song with dynamic rhythm which became very popular. If Raikar were to continue similar compositions in Konkani he would have enriched poetry.

Jesse Fernandes has been consistently writing since liberation. He explores the romantic, natural and spiritual world. His poems show a powerful influence of the compassionate spirit of Christianity and he could be credited for importing novel themes in Konkani poetry.

Konkani had women poets like Saint Avadibai and Jogavva in Karnataka in the 16th century but not much is known about women poets till Vijaya Sarmalkar appeared on the scene before liberation of Goa. Her poems explore family life, marriage, love, romance, beauty of nature and can not be considered as progressive, rebellious or feminist poems. She wrote at a time when women education in Goa was restricted to certain classes. Nuclear families were not a norm. The society did not have many women venturing out to give expressions to their creative urges. The joint family system was still in place and Goa did not have the extent of urbanization as it has today. Vijaya Sarmalkar's poetry may be insulated from contemporary social and economic reality but her contributions can not be dismissed because she cleared the way for the new generation of young, dynamic women poets to follow.

The impact of the first generation

The five years (1962-1966) immediately after Goa's liberation was a period of socio-political, cultural and economic transformation. Educational opportunities made it possible for everyone to have access to the published material. The poetry of B.B. Borkar, Manohar Sardesai, R.V. Pandit created a powerful impact on the young generation. The Panaji station of All India Radio played a stellar role in popularizing Konkani poems and songs. The Poetry festivals organized by Konkani Bhasha Mandal

brought together the old and the new generation of poets. The most important contribution of Borkar, Sardesai and Pandit was the secularization of the poetry. They championed liberty, social and economic justice and liberation of the oppressed masses. They vehemently supported the communal harmony in Goa. This had the desired impact in Goan society. It could identify poetry as the natural medium to express new ideas. The 'opinion poll' caught Goan society in a political vortex. Manohar Sardesai, Shankar Bhandari, B. B. Borkar took up the cause of protecting Goa's separate identity as 'union territory'. Many poets from second generation began contributing during the 'opinion poll' movement. Shantaram Warde Walaulikar (1970) estimated that more than a thousand poems were written during the month long campaign during the opinion poll. Journalist and scholar, Uday Bhembre had actually begun his poetic career in the first generation but the flow ebbed as he switched to hard hitting journalistic prose. He contributed some of the most beautiful lyrics like "Chanyache rati" which continues to cast its magical spell for its sheer melodic beauty.

In January 1967, the 'opinion poll' verdict went in favour of the champions of Goa's separate identity and Konkani language. Taste of this victory inspired many new poets who developed confidence in Konkani poetry.

The vibrant and versatile second generation

The second generation (1967-84) also witnessed a period of political and social flux. The poets of this generation shaped the contemporary Konkani poetry by adopting versatile ideas, forms, metre, themes, imagery, myths, metaphors and idioms. The impact of the growth of higher educational facilities in Goa and the liberal campus life was also reflected in this generation. There were many new voices which were earlier cut off from the mainstream. There was suppressed rage among those who were outraged by the exploitation of the agropastoralists, the farmers, the workers and the toiling masses. Pundalik Naik represented this new force. He gave Konkani the unique metaphor of the 'Bangar bail' (enraged bull). The metaphor stands for the new, liberated and creative spirit of the oppressed masses of Goa. There was backlash from those whose previous generations were suppressed by the landed gentry. There were those like Madhav Borkar who had a deep aesthetic sense and followed the path of Ramani and Bhangí. Ramesh Veluskar drew inspiration from

Pandit but wrote a different poetry to enrich the ecospiritual traditions. There were voices of alienation and of those suffocated by urban congestion. Prakash Padganvkar in 'Vascoyan' captured these moods. S.D. Tendulkar writing under the pseudonym "Kashinath Shamba Loliencar" introduced soul searching abstract poetry. The second generation brought a 'golden age' in modern Konkani poetry.

The inspirations and compulsions of this generation are appropriately represented by a senior poet Nagesh Karmali in his preface to Sahitya akademi award winner collection "Vanshikulachem dene". In his short introductory essay 'My poetry and I' he has emphasized on his consistent and untiring struggles in life. He expressed his helplessness and overwhelming feeling of inaction in "ami ashe vogi kashe" (why are we so silent?) (Sanvar, 1979) which has lines like vedic chants. Assertiveness is an important character of his style. Influenced by Marxist and socialist thoughts and a background of freedom struggle and labour movement, Karmali adopted poetry as a ventilating medium, a self liberating force. He has consistently written since 1968. His poetry is not comparable with any of the poets from previous generation. He uses much harsher imagery, exposes the social realities and adopts an iconoclastic approach in his poetry. His poetry attempts to search the roots of humanism and cultural identity of the Goans. It is a poetry for masses and not for the faint hearted. Karmali likes the form of prayer and hymns. In "Bhuinmatek ule" (Vanshikulachem denem, 1989) he pays a tribute to the fertility of earth.

Ramesh Veluskar has given his impressions about his contemporary poet Pundalik Naik in an essay appended to the second edition of Naik's 'Ga ami Rakhane (We, the cowherds) (1976, 1989) which includes 40 poems. Pundalik Naik contributed these poems during 1970 to 1976. Veluskar has tried to demystify the themes, the metaphors and imagery in Naik's poetry which he considers unique, novel and pristine. Pundalik Naik drew inspiration from nature and his experience of hard rural life. His poetry reflects artistic impressions of nature, his fascination with the eros and the romantic, and outbursts against social injustice. The dedication of his collection makes an interesting reading. Pundalik has dedicated it to "Vadakadchya Saglya rakhanyank" (To all the cowherds near the banyan tree). This collection was a landmark in Konkani poetry and steered the course of Konkani literature in more

proactive and progressive direction. In fact it could be said unequivocally that with this single contribution the foundation of 'Pundalik Naik school' of modern Konkani literature was firmly laid in 1976. Many poets of third generation-to name a few, Sanjeev Vernekar, Uday Mhambre, Prakash Naik, Shrikant Palsarkar, Nilba Khandekar, Ashok Shilkar, Shashikant Punaji were inspired by Pundalik Naik.

Prakash padganvkar began writing poetry in 1968 and published three important collections till 1985. In the first collection, *Uzavadanchim Pavlan* (1976) he was attempting to find his own way. He had the influence of Indian philosophy and spiritualism. The inevitable influence of the previous generation is clearly seen in this collection. The poems are mystical and philosophical. In his second collection, *Vascoyan* (1977), he drew attention to the problems of dehumanization and congestion caused by haphazard urbanization in the port city of Vasco da Gama in particular. Poems in *Vascoyan* offered the first powerful and penetrating glimpse of urban Goa which was experiencing a post liberation construction boom. Padganvkar changed his style in the third and Sahitya Akademi award winning collection 'Hav manis Ashvatthamo' (1985). He used the myth of the immortal Ashvatthama to explore the human condition. The poems in this collection are a harsh commentary on dehumanization, industrialization and the cursed lives of the modernized humans. Using the Mahabharatha legend, Padganvkar says "I am a human, Ashvatthamo..., like an island lost in its' own search/ I am a labourer, officer, professor, leader/ I am thief, beggar, painter, sculptor/ lawyer, freedom fighter, I am Ashvatthama'. This collection established Padganvkar as a new genre poet but subsequently (post 1985) his poetry got trapped in a labyrinth of experimental themes from which it is trying to escape as found in his latest (2003) collection 'Dhanvati Nhaiy kalachi' (the flowing torrent of time).

Ecoerotic, ecospiritual and mystical trends

There are two poets of this generation- Madhav Borkar and Ramesh Veluskar who created their own literary space in Konkani poetry. They were close to their role models-Ramani and Bhangji who were also active during this period. There was a lot of interaction between these two generations. Madhav Borkar and Veluskar took care to insulate their poetry from social and political themes although such forms were popular.

Both the poets explored nature, spirituality and the inner depths of human mind. Madhav Borkar used artistic craftsmanship in his poetry. In very few words and with impressive subtlety he tried to paint abstract and complex images of nature, the spiritual and mystical world and the erotic and romantic moods. In 1968 he published 'Chanvar' (The blossom), followed by 'vatachyo Savalyo' (The shadows of sunlight) in 1972, 'uzavadacho rukh' (The tree of light) in 1975 and 'Parjalache dar' (The door to radiance) in 1986. Madhav Borkar's poetry matured from the days of Chanvar. He adopted an abstract form. In his recent collection 'Avayaktachi gani' (songs of the unexpressed) (2002), Borkar has given details of evolution of his poetry. He has confessed to influence of other poets like P.S. Rege and Shankar Ramani but later he came out of such influence. Borkar's 'Yaman' (1999) received the Sahitya Akademi award in 2001. This collection provides glimpses of Borkar's style and shows the legacy of Ramani and Bhangí. Borkar's well crafted poems show a mature understanding of the form. He uses impressionistic and abstract style to describe natural images or spiritual ideas. Certain images like darkness and light are very common in his poems. Borkar's consistent, mature, artistic and aesthetic poetic contributions are as important as Manohar Sardesai's in the first generation.

Ramesh Veluskar's first aesthetically published collection 'Morpankham' (1985) was a breath of fresh air in Konkani poetry. Veluskar tried to blend and breed the aesthetic and phonetic elements from folklore in the poetry. The poems in 'Morpankham' were rich in sound and rhythm and their effect lingered in mind. Ecological eroticism and ecospirituality obsessed the poetic expression of Ramesh Veluskar. He delved deeper into myths and legends and tried to personify natural elements in colorful poetic fantasies as in 'Savulgori' (1989). This was an attempt to create a new folklore. The rich and erotic images which he used in 'Savulgori', were unique in Konkani poetry. Personification of ecological elements like a Silk cotton tree (Savar, *Bombax malabarica*) to weave a complex tapestry of feminine erotic charm was a seductive and magical spell cast by Veluskar.

'Savulgori' is another landmark in post-independence Konkani poetry. It introduced the form of truly ecoerotic poetry in Konkani. In his other poetry collections, 'Mati', 'Hiranyagarbha' and 'Tanarjyoti' he has tried

to discover a common, holistic, harmonious, uniting spiritual thread. Poems in

Matí invoke the mother earth and her fertility power. In '*Hiranyagarbha*' the poems pay tribute to the Sun and energy and. In '*Angani Nachta Mor*' a fairy tale is improvised but the erotic element is inescapable. His poetry is aesthetically and phonetically oriented and in the process of creating a rhythm occasionally it loses substance. Critics and his contemporaries like Madhav Borkar (1999) have compared him with the Marathi poet N.D. Mahanor and remarked that Veluskar's recent poetry has become stagnated with the poets' obsession with phonetically rhythmic words. But a composite reading of his entire work proves it to be substantially original and meaningful. '*Shir shir namrube*' is Veluskar's most popular and widely recited poem. It captures the mood and essence of the Jagor folk-dance-drama performance. With superb organically holistic composition, rich phonetics, dynamic rhythm and spiritually profound meaning- this poem casts a magical spell on readers or listeners. Veluskar gave a new dimension to Konkani poetry and took forward Pandit's legacy in terms of deriving the substance from folklore and improvising on indigenous ideas, myths and legends. Veluskar's poetry is never harsh or propagandist. He has been one of the consistent and productive poet from second generation and continues to experiment even today.

Suresh Jaiwant Borkar is not known to be a mainstream poet of the second generation. He began writing poetry in 1970. B.B. Borkar has included his poems in the anthology edited by him. Borkar's '*Vajrathikam*' (1985) includes his poems of the 1970-80 decade. It is a philosophical, spiritual and extended improvisation of the form adopted by Manoharraí Sardesai in '*Zayo Zuyo*' and '*Pissolim*'. Borkar's spiritual self search and his understanding of the human condition is reflected in most of the poems. Some of the poems paint the depressed and cynical mood of the poet but generally '*Vajrathikam*' is a very mature philosophy of life.

Konkani poet from Mangalore, Karnataka, Charles Francis Dacosta, known as '*Chafra*' wrote beautiful lyrical poems in the typical south Kanara dialect of Konkani. His first collection '*Sonshyachem Kan*' (1988) includes 55 popular poems. '*Had chedva budkulo*' is one of his popular poem which is known for its' romantic mood. Chafra used the

nuances of the folklore to imply some contradictions of life as seen in 'Adkulo go budkulo'. Superficially this lyrical poem appears humorous but actually it is a satire on social hypocrisy. Chafra's poetry is versatile, simple and often we find reflection of the lives of the Mangalorean catholic community. His poetry was initially a 'culture shock' for the second generation poets in Goa but the efforts made by Fr. Pratap Naik (1984) exposed the Goan Konkani audience to the wealth of poetry in Karnataka and today Chafra is a familiar name in Goa.

Fr. Pratap Naik's 'Kajule' (the fireflies, 1983) shows his sensitivity towards nature and human sufferings. He writes with deep compassion about 'Chedi' (a whore) and comments on "kamgaranchem jivit" (the workers' lives).

Shivanand Tendulkar alias 'Kashinath Shamba Loliencar', somewhat influenced by the contemporary trends in Marathi poetry, experimented with the post modernist abstract, complex, absurd and surrealist trends beginning with 'Kashi Mhanta' (1982). This collection shows an obsession with style and the form which the poet uses as a 'shock treatment' to captivate the reader. The abstract, absurd and surrealist form was also tried by Shankar Parulkar. But Parulkar was not consistent unlike Loliencar. Loliencar's subsequent poetry is completely juxtaposed to any of the contribution from the second generation poets. With two more poetry collections 'Kashik mhanchech padta' (1997) and 'Kashin mhanpache sodunk na' (1999) Loliencar has created some sort of a narcissistic trilogy which offers his poetic insights on mundane and routine things and events. Some of his poems have explored sexually explicit and controversial themes which could have earlier offended people. But these were appreciated by an increasingly mature readership. Tendulkar's alias Kashinath Shamba Loliencar's place in post modern Konkani poetry is unique because he handled complex forms like surrealism with relative ease without losing the substance. Unfortunately critics in Konkani literature have not done much justice to Loliencar's trilogy which in all include 130 poems.

One of the most prolific writer in Konkani, Ramkrishna Zuarkar wrote numerous songs and poems with romantic, social, political and spiritual themes. In Mogrim (1984) he has included a few romantic love songs. But Zuarkar could not find his own voice in poetry and later shifted to devotional and spiritual literature. Bicaji Ghanekar

wrote popular songs and humorous poems. He chose a style (Haves, 1986) which was easy for the common people to understand but the critics could not identify much literary merit in his poetry.

Between 1967-1984, Konkani poetry was enriched by many other poets, who included Olivinho Gomes, Dilip Borkar, Yusuf Shaikh, Suhas Dalal, Tukaram Shet, Tensing Rodrigues, N. Shivadas, Bharat Naik, Bhiku Bomi Naik, Gajanan Jog, Prakash Tahli, Manuel C. Rodrigues, Suresh Pai, Vimal Prabhudessai, R. Ramnath. Many of them switched from poetry to drama, short stories or other forms and it is estimated that thousands of poems of this period have not been compiled in collections.

The end of this period was marked by a massive statewide agitation by 'Konkani Porjecho avaz' to demand official language and statehood status for Konkani in Goa. The third generation of the Konkani poets was generally impacted by the experience of this agitation and the challenges thrown by it. The third generation had behind it the rich legacy of the previous two generations.

The contribution of 'ritu', the exclusive bimonthly for poetry

In 1984, Kulagar publications launched a unique venture by bringing out 'Ritu' a bimonthly magazine exclusively dedicated to Konkani poetry. It was continued till 1990 and provided a platform for the third generation poets. Recently it has been revived and is edited by Gokulads Prabhu.

The post-television generation of Konkani poets

Television began transforming the Goan society after 1982 but the impact began to be felt towards 1984-5. The third generation of Konkani poets was born in the vibrant college campuses which had experienced the triumph of students' agitation. The young poets were eager to experiment with new forms and bold themes. They could see cataclysmic social changes around. Towns were growing at phenomenal speed. Slums had become part of the urban landscape. Society was riddled with corruption. There were new problems associated with industrialization. Environmental issues had come to the forefront. The battle for official language had been won at a heavy cost. It had alienated the supporters of Marathi. There was a palpable rift between the two sections. This caused fresh recruitment of young talent in Konkani. Sudesh Sharad Lotlikar published 'Pais' giving a new dimension to Konkani poetry with its rich imagery and metaphors. In 1987 Goa got statehood and soon entered

into a phase of political instability. The young minds were watching this transformation during 1984-1990. Nilba Khandekar's 'Vedh' (1989) captures the moods of this generation. Somewhat influenced by the style of Nagesh Karmali, Khandekar's poems condemned the political and social hypocrisy. He continued to explore new themes from current global political affairs and technological changes. Khandekar's poetry offers a collage of his sensitive observations on contemporary events. Within 15 years he produced a considerably mature collection- Agni (2002) signaling his arrival among the galaxy of acclaimed Konkani poets. Khandekar's progress shows the success of the third generation in absorbing the contemporary trends in modern literature. Another representative of the third generation Prasad Loliencar explored the metaphysical interrelationship between nature and culture in 'Mulam' (the roots, 1995) by using the metaphors like tree roots, houses and rain. Sanjiv Verenkar's 'Bhavzumbar' (1986), 'Mumbar' (1992) and 'Gavakadchi Sanj' (2003) follow the tradition of the previous generation. Verenkar's poems are focused on socially volatile themes but he tempers the fire with poems on nature and village life. His contemporary Prakash Dattarm Naik showed promise with 'Chaitar' (1987). Ashok Shilkar in his 'Saimachya aanganant' (1994) wrote about various moods of nature and the changing landscape. His poems show a deep understanding of ecological and natural processes and a certain degree of innocence.

Bhalchandra Gaonkar, a young scholar of Konkani language has contributed poems since 1980. His two poetry collections- 'Advanatale ule' (1991) and 'yadinche deger' (2001) show his social sensitivity and a desperate introspection of life. He has not experimented with style but in 'advantale ule' he has used an interesting categorization to build a taxonomy of reminiscences. This was a novelty in introspective Konkani poetry.

Paresh Narendra Kamat's eco-erotic poetry

Paresh Narendra Kamat represents a new and promising voice among the third generation Konkani poets. He has so far contributed more than 300 poems. His first poetry collection "Alang" (softly) (2000), included 58 poems. The second collection, Garbhakhol (2004) includes 83 poems. Eco-erotic approach is not new in Konkani. The element of eros has been artistically grasped by Paresh Kamat in such subtle and profound manner that in precise words his poems convey the ideas. Stylistically

and phonetically, the poetry of Paresh Kamat is different than any of the poet of previous generations. Paresh is fascinated by the erotic element and most of his poems revolve around the ideas of romantic physical involvement, recreative and procreative sex, fertility, gestation, nurture, nourishment and contrasting ideas of light and darkness, life and death, dawn and dusk and within a limited repertoire of themes he weaves his verse effectively. 'Tuje Tharthar Merer' (on your vibrant boundary) , is one of his truly erotic poem, where the beauty of the feminine element is expressed as a charming mystery. Paresh writes "I dissolve in you, more and more.." indicating the dissolution of the male ego in an intimate sexual encounter. 'Ghe Palvant' (embrace me) is a poem which urges the feminine element to share a new experience-"Let there be darkness in the body, but the light would germinate", writes Paresh. Peshi (the cell) is a word which is often used by Paresh and that shows his fascination with the intimate, at atomic, cellular, fundamental level. He wishes to connect the erotic experience to the very roots of life and fertility. His poems show a keen awareness of the cosmic cycle, and the role of 'Kama' in the perpetuation of life. In 'Tal' (the depths), he reaches the conclusion that "both of us can't fathom our depths". Paresh Kamat has carved his own niche in the new generation.

Other significant contributors

Shashikant Punaji, Satchit Phadte, Vishnu surya Wagh, Dnyaneshwar Tari, Rajay Pawar, Purnanand Chari, Shanti Prabhu Tendulkar, Nayana Adarkar, Amita surlakar, Nutan Sakhardande, Arun Sakhardande, Shrikant Palsarkar, Shailendra Mehta, Prashanti Talponkar and several others have contributed during the past 20 years to expand the vistas of modern Konkani poetry. Shashikant Punaji has written some powerful poems with social themes. Vishnu Surya Wagh has crafted songs and poems with artistic skills with an unique understanding of metre and diction. Purnaand chari has handled versatile themes but he is best at lyrics. Rajay Pawar has shown tremendous promise among his contemporaries with choice of unique and original themes and well structured poems.

The impact of third generation

The young poets of third generation are still experimenting with the form and themes. They are harmoniously coexisting and interacting with the second generation. The third generation was prodigious in its' output of

poetry, adding 12-15 collections on average per year since 1985. Poets like Nilba Khandekar, Sudesh Lotlikar, Bhalchandra Gaonkar, Paresh Kamat, Prasad Lolienkar, Rajay Pawar, Shashikant Punaji have impressed the upcoming generation. Perhaps the fourth generation would greatly benefit from them.

Feminist poetry

As compared to strong voices against oppression found in the Konkani poetry contributed by the male poets, poetry by the women appears very weak in theme and substance. Despite genuine attempts by Konkani women's annual 'Chitrangi' edited by Hema Naik, feminism as a radical voice has not consistently and forcefully emerged in Konkani poetry. A survey of the Konkani poems published during 1991-2002 in college magazines showed that the young women are hesitant to touch radical feminist themes. This trend is likely to change with time as crimes against women are rising in the Goan society. There is expansion of higher educational facilities for women in this generation. Their voices are bound to reflect powerfully in the coming years.

Dalit poetry in Konkani

Interestingly there is no school of dalit poetry in Konkani although many poets from Goa's SC community contribute in Konkani. Dalit voices are still generally expressed in Marathi. But with better education and self awareness dalit poetry is likely to enrich Konkani.

Adivasi (ST) voices in Konkani poetry

Gavade, Kunbi and Velip are three ST communities in Goa and the fourth one -the Gavalis or Dhangars are waiting for their inclusion in ST list. After Pundit's championing of the Gavade community in 1963, there have been only faint voices which have captured the life, sufferings, dreams and aspirations of the ST communities of Goa. The situation is same in other Konkani speaking areas outside Goa where Konkani speaking tribals reside. The Siddis in Karnataka have been left out from Konkani poetic canvas.

New themes in Konkani poetry

Technological development, middle class consumerism, alternative lifestyles, nuclearisation of the families, leisure culture, mass tourism, accelerated routines and globalization are impacting the new generation of Konkani poets. Images and symbolism from the world of information technology, internet and computer culture, biotechnology, genetic

engineering, cloning, robots are diffusing in the poems. There is a resurgence in environmentalism. So, poems dedicated to the nature, ecology and condemning technology are bound to be popular. These trends are visible but there is a lack of consistency on the parts of the new poets.

Multimedia revolution and Konkani poetry

Konkani society loves music. The multimedia revolution has made it possible to record Konkani lyrics on Audio CDs and VCDs. Television has popularized Konkani poetry through special programmes. Konkani poems are now available on dedicated websites.

Critical appreciation of Konkani poetry

This is a gray area in Konkani literature. Although more than 500 poetry collections have been published since 1963, only a few have been reviewed. Stray articles and seminar papers on Konkani poetry get published. But there are no comprehensive works of criticism which can do full justice to major post independence poets.

Final Remarks

This is not claimed to be an exhaustive review of the post independence Konkani poetry. It is rather an impressionistic overview of the contributions made by the three distinct generations of poets from 1946-2004. Certain trends are visible. The first generation was inspired by the freedom struggle of India and Goa. There was little urge for experimentation and innovation. The poetry of this period generally appears 'propagandist' and 'populist'. Iconoclastic and rebellious voices were first introduced by R. V. Pandit. In contradiction, Ramani, Bhangji, Madhav Borkar and Ramesh Veluskar explored the intricacies of nature and the depths inner universe. Socialist and humanist ideologies seem to have dominated throughout this period. But the real challenge to the establishment came from the poetry of Pundalik Naik and Nagesh Karmali. There were different and simultaneous currents. Kashinath Shamba Loliencar followed a non confirmist style. Paresh Kamat escaped from harsh realities in the cool shadow of ecoerotic poetry. Nilba Khnadekar was overwhelmed by global events and began searching for their local signatures. Manoharraji Sardesai introduced the first improvisation of the form of short poems in Pissolim. Later many poets imitated him. Ramesh Veluskar was lost in his own labyrinth of words from which Madhav Borkar managed to escape. Poets began more

assertive about their poetry after 1990 and it became a fashion to elaborate on the creative process. Narcissism is not new in literature but it is a stark reality in post independent Konkani poetry. The peculiar social conditions in Goa could not encourage feminist voices in poetry.

A certain degree of stagnation is visible among the poets outside Goa. They have not dared to experiment with either novel forms or radical themes. Kashinath Shamba Loliénkar's poetry may be unacceptable in Kerala. The spiritually oriented Konkani poetry from Kerala may not be appealing in Goa. Across the Konkani speaking region from Mumbai to Malabar there are stark contradictions and differences in the entire range of Konkani poetry. Modern trends are not synchronous across this belt. This may stunt the growth and development of Konkani poetry outside Goa. Transliteration of poetry published in non-devanagari script may not help much. There is limited interaction between Goan Konkani poets and their contemporaries in other states. Poor knowledge of poems in nagari script and the difficulty in understanding the nuances and subtleties of ideas and images may hinder positive creative interaction.

There are no attempts to write long poems or produce modern epics in Konkani poetry. The social, political, economic and ecological transformation of Goa is a theme by itself which could test the creative stamina of the Konkani poets.

Post 1981, anthologies of Konkani poetry have not been compiled and published. Thousands of good poems lie still scattered in the pages of many periodicals. Harsh criticism of poetry is not tolerated even by the senior poets and this automatically puts curbs on sincere and objective criticism. Many second generation poets seem to run out of ideas and are merely repackaging their old unpublished poetry. The third generation poets crave for instant recognition and appreciation.

The future of the Konkani poetry would depend on the broadening of its' social base and incorporation of dalit, adivasi and feminist voices. The wealth generating Konkani society has not got rid of its' internal inconsistencies. It has to understand all the voices. There are many publication opportunities as compared to any other period in the past. But sincere and consistent efforts are necessary at the academic and non academic level to encourage new forms, ideas and themes in Konkani poetry.

As an integral part of the great Indian literary ethos, Konkani poetry of past 56 years has definitely carved its' niche. It has come a long way from the days of freedom struggle. The dominance of poetry in the Konkani literature could be gauged from the fact that 13 out of 27 Sahitya Akademy awards for literature have been bagged by poets till 2001. This is a proof of the importance of poetry in the literary life of the Konkani society. It has accomplished substantially in creative terms in the 56 years after independence. Despite weaknesses and inconsistencies identified in this article, it can be certainly said that under the influence of three creative and dynamic generations modern Konkani poetry is poised for a giant leap in the 21 st century.

Notes:-

1. The article is based on the availability of published material in the official Devanagari script of Konkani.
2. According to Nagesh Karmali (pers. comm.), since 1961, over 500 poetry collections were published in Goa. But this claim has not been substantiated. For the purpose of this article about 200 poetry collections and 3 anthologies have been used.
3. A large number of poems by women poets have been published in special issues of the magazine 'Chitrangi'. These could not be referred as the issues are rare. It is acknowledged that this may cause some gender imbalance in the article.

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